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ABSTRACT

This document examines selected data from the 1987 Gallup Career Development Survey in which 735 employed workers 18 years old and older responded to the 20 survey questions. The data examined how much help was needed in career choices and who provided such help, how much help was needed in career information and who provided such help, how much help was given in supplying career information and making career choices and to whom such help was given, and how much the education system contributed to preparing adult employed workers for their first jobs. The findings are interpreted as showing that career development needs appear to be greatest for minority persons and for persons who have not attended college; and that career development assistance appears to be most used by non-minority persons and by persons who have attended college. It is asserted that the existing educational system is providing greater opportunities to whites and to males than to blacks or to females. The findings are interpreted as illustrating a great and urgent need for expansion of career guidance and career information system efforts. (NB)

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IMPLICATIONS OF THE 1987 GALLUP CAREER DEVELOPMENT SURVEY FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS

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Introduction

The 1987 Gallup Career Development Survey was sponsored jointly by NCDA, NOICC, and NCRVE. In addition to financial sponsorship, representatives of these three organizations worked together in formulating the 20 questions found in this landmark survey. It was a very bold and, in my opinion, a very wise joint venture.

In a previous paper (Hoyt, 1988), I have analyzed responses to all 20 questions given by the 735 employed workers 18 years old and older participating in this survey. Here, I want to separate out selected data useful in answering the following questions:

1. How much help was needed in career choices? By whom?
2. How much help was needed in career information? By whom?
3. How much help was given in supplying career information and making career choices? To whom?
4. How much did the education system contribute to preparing today's adult employed workers for their first jobs?

Following this, I will conclude by discussing three basic policy implications that seem to me to be apparent from these data.

Indicators of How Much Help Was Needed in Career Choices and in Finding-/Using Career Information

About 1 in 10 adult employed workers - an estimated 10.8 million persons -reported needing help in the last year in selecting, changing, or obtaining a job. The percentages were about the same for men (9.5%) and women (10.4%). However, blacks (21.7%) were almost 2 1/2 times as likely as whites (8.9%) to say this was true for them.

About 4 in 10 employed workers - an estimated 42.9 million persons - expect to leave their current jobs sometime within the next 3 years. Figures are similar for men (39.3%) and for women (36.7%). However, over half (55%) of blacks as opposed to only about one-third (37%) of whites expect to do so.

About half of all respondents (51.1%) believe that most adult Americans don't know how to interpret and use information to make intelligent career decisions.

Almost 6 in 10 (58.5%) believe most adults said that they need assistance in getting career information.

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If they could start their career planning over, more than 6 in 10 (62.7%) (55.6% males/61.7% women) report they would try to get more career information than they had the first time. This is true for a much larger percentage of blacks (78.5%) than whites (50.5%) and for a much larger percentage of high school graduates (64.6%) than college graduates (54.1%).

Indicators of How Much Help Was Given in Career Choices

These Gallup data provide both "bad news" and "good news" about how much help was given these adult employed workers in career choices. The "bad news" is that the general answer is "not much". The "good news" is that sexism does not appear to be a factor here. The following figures illustrate these generalizations.

Only 38.5% (39.3% men/ 37.5% women) reported they first got started in their present career through making a conscious choice and following a definite plan. This means almost two in three currently employed adults did not. What kind of record is this for what we call the "land of the free"?

Fewer than 1 of 5 (17.2%) respondents (16.8% men/17.7% women) reported they had sought assistance from a school or college counselor

Only 2.2% - an estimated 2.39 million of 109 million employed adult workers - reported they had gone to a computerized career information system for career assistance. (1.9% men/2.5% women).

About one in three (32.2%) (35.7% men/29.4% women) reported they had gone to no source for help or advice in career development.

Indicators of Racism In Providing Help In Career Choices

While sexism was not shown here to be a problem in terms of providing help in career choices, a number of indicators were discovered indicating that racism does exist here. Examples are:

Whites (24.6%) were twice as likely to have gotten started by "chance circumstances" as blacks (12.6%). Apparently, blacks aren't as "lucky" as whites in such things as hearing about job openings from friends, knowing someone who can help them meet a prospective employer, or having a relative who owns the company!

Self-directed activities (such as visiting libraries, reading classified ads, etc.) were used much more commonly by whites (42.2%) than by blacks (30.3%).

Blacks (26.4%) were more than twice as likely as whites (11.7%) to report they took "the only job available".

Indicators of How Much Help Was Provided by the Education System

Self-directed activities were used by a much higher percentage of college graduates (45.3%) as opposed to persons with less than a high school education (24.7%).

College and university programs were considered important in getting first full-time jobs by a greater percentage of men (33.5%) than women (26.0%).

College and university programs were considered important in getting first full-time jobs by a larger percentage of whites (32.3%) than blacks (19.1%)

While over half of the college graduates (56.2%) made a conscious career choice and followed a definite plan, only 30.1% of high school graduates did so.

College graduates (25.7%) were more than twice as likely as high school graduates (12.4%) to have sought assistance from a counselor.

High school graduates (19.1%) were several times as apt as college graduates (3.6%) to report they took "the only job available".

A much larger percentage of high school dropouts (41.8%) than college graduates (27.8%) said they had gone to no source for help or advice in career development.

Only 27.8% of college graduates, but 41.8% of high school dropouts reported they had gone to no source for help or advice in career development.

Apprenticeship was important to twice as high a percentage of males (17.1%) as females (6.7%) and almost three times as high a percentage of whites (11.3%) as blacks (4.5%).

High school vocational education was considered important in getting their first full-time jobs by 18.1% - an estimated 19.7 million - of adult employed workers. (16.5% men/19.9% women).

Policy Implications

Numerous policy implications are apparent from these data. First, it seems clear that career development needs appear to be greatest for minority persons and for persons who have not attended college. Career development assistance appears to be most used by non-minority persons and by persons who have attended college. This paradoxical situation should not be allowed to continue. At least as much quality career development assistance should be made available to persons not attending college as to those who do. This is not just a temporary problem. Even by the year 2000, most employed workers will need no more than a high school education (Kutscher, 1987; The Forgotten Half, 1988). And certainly career development needs of minority persons are now so great society can no longer ignore them. Efforts to correct these current disparities must begin during the K-12 years and continue through the adult working years.

Similarly, both sexism and racism are clearly operating in career development patterns of employed adults. The existing education system appears to be providing greater opportunities to whites and to males than to females or to blacks. This is entirely consistent with research reported earlier by others (Garrett Park Press, 1987; Time for Results, 1986; Wetzel, 1987).

There is no way equity in the workplace can exist until and unless full equity of educational opportunity is provided both women and minority persons.

It is also clear from these findings that blacks have experienced and continue to experience a greater need for assistance in career development than whites/males. Yet, assistance of professional counselors has been reported more frequently by whites/males than by blacks. There is an urgent and vital challenge to move rapidly toward providing true equity of opportunity for professional career development assistance to blacks. Because their expressed needs are greater, the term "true equity" should be interpreted to mean that, at present, more and better career development assistance should be made available to blacks than to whites/males. Once true equity is attained, equal access to help should, of course, become available to all.

Second, with fewer than 1 in 5 employed workers (17.2%) reporting having sought career development assistance from school or college counselors, 1 in 11 from employment service counselors (8.7%) and 1 in 10 from private employment agencies, it seems clear their is an urgent need to provide counselors better able to meet the career development needs of all persons. Hopefully, these data will stimulate existing counselors and those who educate them to change in ways that will be effective in meeting the kinds of career development needs expressed in these findings. Unless they do so soon, the Federal Government should seriously consider underwriting the cost of developing and implementing alternative graduate programs of counselor education for persons wishing to become competent professional career counselors.

Third, adult workers have, through their responses to these questions, expressed an undeniable need for career information and for assistance in understanding and using such information in their own career development. It is time that the NOICC/SOICC network be expanded to meet these needs. Three responsibilities must be met: (a) producing career information needed by adult workers; (b) helping adult workers learn how to understand and use such information; and (c) assisting adult workers in using such information.

These responsibilities can best be met through establishing Community Career Development Resource Centers operating under a greatly expanded NOICC/SOICC network at the local community level. Three basic types of professionals needed at each such Center are: (a) career information specialists skilled in gathering, organizing, and disseminating career information; (b) teachers who can help persons learn how to understand and use career information; and (c) career counselors who can assist persons in using such information in making career decisions.

The Community Career Development Resource Center could and should serve youth as well as adults. In those communities where a strong emphasis on career guidance already exists within the K-12 school system and/or the local community college, the Center could serve as an effective supplement to current efforts. In those many communities where the education system continues to essentially ignore the career development needs of youth and adults, the Center could compensate for this.

Concluding Remarks

The kinds of data reported here represent only a small portion of the total found in results of the 1987 Gallup Career Development Survey. Even these selected findings should be sufficient to illustrate the great and urgent need for marked expansion of both career guidance and career information system efforts. If these results are seriously considered by our nation's key decisionmakers, perhaps they will lead to provision of the kinds of significant increases in resources required to respond effectively to the needs and conditions illustrated by these data.

If done now, future surveys will be useful in tracking progress toward meeting the kinds of needs expressed here. If nothing is done as a result of these data, future surveys can, at best, be expected only to confirm the seriousness of the need. More likely, they will illustrate these needs are growing. Let us hope we will act now on what we have learned from these results.

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